

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PHNOM 05248 300839 Z

14

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 ABF-01 H-01 NSCE-00 NSC-10 PM-03

M-03 A-01 INR-09 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 RSR-01 RSC-01 /058 W

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R 290935 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1434

SECDEF

CJCS

INFO CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 5248

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, EAID, MARR, CB

SUBJ: GAO REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON EMBASSY ROLE
IN AIR OPERATIONS

REF: PHNOM PENH 05095/250510 Z MAY 73

1. AT THEIR REQUEST, WE GAVE THE USGAO

REPRESENTATIVES A DETAILED ORAL BRIEFING ON
EMBASSY PARTICIPATION IN AIR OPERATIONS,
DISTINGUISHING THE PERIODS:

(A) PRIOR TO JANUARY 29, 1973, IN
WHICH THE EMBASSY HAD NO ROLE IN AIR
OPERATIONS, OTHER THAN AS A CONDUIT FOR

OCCASIONAL ARCLIGHT STRIKE VALIDATIONS
BY FANK;

(B) BETWEEN JANUARY 29 AND APRIL 28, 1973,
IN WHICH FOR BOTH POLITICAL REASONS (WE HOPED
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 05248 300839 Z

TO BE IN A CEASE FIRE ENVIRONMENT) AND COMMUNICATIONS REQUIREMENTS THE EMBASSY HAD ACTED AS INTERMEDIARY AND VALIDATOR FOR TACAIR AND B-52 STRIKES; AND

(C) SINCE APRIL 28, 1973, IN WHICH THE EMBASSY HAS REMOVED ITSELF FROM TACTICAL AIR OPERATIONS.

2. FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 29 TO APRIL 28, 1973, WE REFERRED THEM TO THE LOWENSTEIN AND MOOSE REPORT, NOTING THAT SINCE THE BRIEFING WE GAVE STAFFDEL ON APRIL 11, THE AMBASSADOR HAD ASSUMED CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE EMBASSY B-52 PANEL.

3. WE TOLD THE GAO REPRESENTATIVES THAT WE COULD NOT ADDRESS ROE, SORTIE NUMBERS, OR DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIVITY WITHIN CAMBODIA; THEY WOULD HAVE TO ASK CINCPAC OR CJCS FOR THAT.

4. THE USGAO REPRESENTATIVES RAISED THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER OUR ACTIVITIES ARE CONSISTENT WITH COOPER-CHURCH, NOTING PARTICULARLY THE LANGUAGE PROHIBITING THE PROVISION OF "UNITED STATES ADVISERS TO OR FOR MILITARY, PARAMILITARY, POLICE, OR OTHER SECURITY OR INTELLIGENCE FORCES IN CAMBODIA" (SECTION 7(A), PUBLIC LAW 91-652 AS AMENDED BY PUBLIC LAW 92-226).

5. WE RESPONDED THAT:

(A) THE EMBASSY CAN AND DOES PROVIDE ADVICE TO THE GKR (FOR EXAMPLE ON PAYROLL PADDING) BUT HAS CAREFULLY REFRAINED FROM PROVIDING ADVISERS IN THE DIRECT OPERATIONAL SENSE TO KHMER MILITARY UNITS OR FORCES, WHETHER AT THE BATTALION OR HEADQUARTERS LEVEL;

(B) PROCESSING OF REQUESTS FOR AIR SUPPORT SUBMITTED BY THE FANK COULD NOT BE CONSTRUED AS "ADVICE" TO THE KHMERS, FOR OUR RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE NOT TO FANK BUT TO COMUSMACV, WHO ALONE COULD AUTHORIZE AIR STRIKES.
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 05248 300839 Z

IN RESPONSE TO THE USGAO REPRESENTATIVES' QUESTION AS TO WHETHER THE EMBASSY INITIATES AIR STRIKES, WE REPLIED "NO."

6. THE USGAO REPRESENTATIVES REMARKED THAT THE BOMBING WOULD APPEAR TO BE INORDINATELY EXPENSIVE FOR THE RESULT OBTAINED, AND ASKED WHETHER IT HAD REALLY BEEN NECESSARY.

WE RESPONDED:

(A) THAT THE COST- EFFECTIVENESS OF AIR OPERATIONS SHOULD BE JUDGED WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS ON CAMBODIA OPERATIONS MUTUALLY AGREED TO BY THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS.

(B) THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE AIR OPERATIONS HAD BEEN TO CREATE A SITUATION IN WHICH NEGOTIATIONS AMONG THE KHMER PARTIES IS POSSIBLE; THAT MEANT IN PARTICULAR THAT THE ATTEMPT BY HANOI TO BREAK OPEN THE WHOLE CEASE FIRE STRUCTURE BY PROVOKING THE COLLAPSE OF THE GKR HAD TO BE DEFEATED, AND AS DECISIVELY AS POSSIBLE; ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE THE FULL EFFECTS OF THE BOMBING, IT IS CLEAR THAT IT HAS PROVIDED A CRITICAL MARGIN OF SURVIVAL FOR THE GKR; ENEMY LOSSES (WE CITED THE INFORMAL ESTIMATE OF 10,000 KBA SINCE JANUARY) HAD BEEN HEAVY ENOUGH, AND ENEMY GAINS SMALL ENOUGH SO AS AT LEAST TO POSE THE QUESTION TO THE ENEMY AS TO WHETHER AN ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY INVOLVING NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT BE MORE PROMISING.

7. THE GAO REPRESENTATIVES INQUIRED ABOUT CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. WE REPLIED THAT THE ROE ARE INTENDED TO PREVENT THEM. ALTHOUGH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO USE HEAVY ORDNANCE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE WITHOUT CAUSING SOME CASUALTIES, ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT CIVILIAN LOSSES HAVE IN FACT BEEN LIGHT. IN SPECIFIC, WE NOTED:

(A) THAT OUR CONTACTS WITH INCOMING REFUGEES HAD DISCLOSED NO ARCLIGHT AND ALMOST NO TACAIR
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 PHNOM 05248 300839 Z

CASUALTIES;

(B) THAT SIMILAR INQUIRIES BY SCHANBERG OF THE NEW YORK TIMES OF SOME THREE DOZEN FAMILIES AND NEED OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS WITH SOME 150 FAMILIES CONFIRMED THIS CONCLUSION;

(C) THAT TRAVEL TO ROUTES 1 AND 30 AND OTHER COMBAT ZONES SHOWED CRATERING WAS ALMOST TOTALLY ABSENT FROM BUILT UP AREAS, AND THAT THE DESTRUCTION OF HOUSES HAD BEEN LARGELY BY BURNING, ALMOST SURELY BY ENEMY FORCES;

(D) THAT WITH TWO EXCEPTIONS ALL B-52 STRIKES HAD

FALLEN WITHIN THEIR ASSIGNED BOXES; IN SOME OF THE
EXCEPTIONS THERE HAD BEEN ONE CIVILIAN KILLED;

(E) THAT IN ADDITION WE HAD BEEN ABLE TO IDENTIFY
THREE CASES OF NIGHTTIME B-52 STRIKES IN OPEN
COUNTRY IN WHICH WE BELIEVE THERE HAVE BEEN
CIVILIAN CASUALTIES;

(F) THAT WE REMAIN ALERT TO THE POSSIBILITY
OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, AND USE KHMER- SPEAKING
EMBASSY OFFICERS TO FOLLOW UP ALL CASUALTY STORIES
THAT COME TO OUR ATTENTION.
SWANK

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS
*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PHNOM05248
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730556/aaaajyru.tel
Line Count: 184
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 73 PHNOM PENH 05095/250510 Z MAY 73
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20-Nov-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <14-Dec-2001 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 980311
Subject: GAO REQUEST FOR STATEMENT ON EMBASSY ROLE IN AIR OPERATIONS
TAGS: EAID, MARR, MOPS, CB
To: CINCPAC
CJCS
COMMUSSAG
EA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

